

The President's Daily Brief

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14 September 1972

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

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An Israeli official says Tel Aviv intends to focus "unremitting pressure" on Syria in order to halt Arab terrorist activities.

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Ambassador Tasca estimates that Greek Prime Minister Papadopoulos has less than a 50-50 chance of remaining in office much longer. (Page 3)

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Indonesia [redacted] China to assess prospects for normalizing relations. (Page 4)

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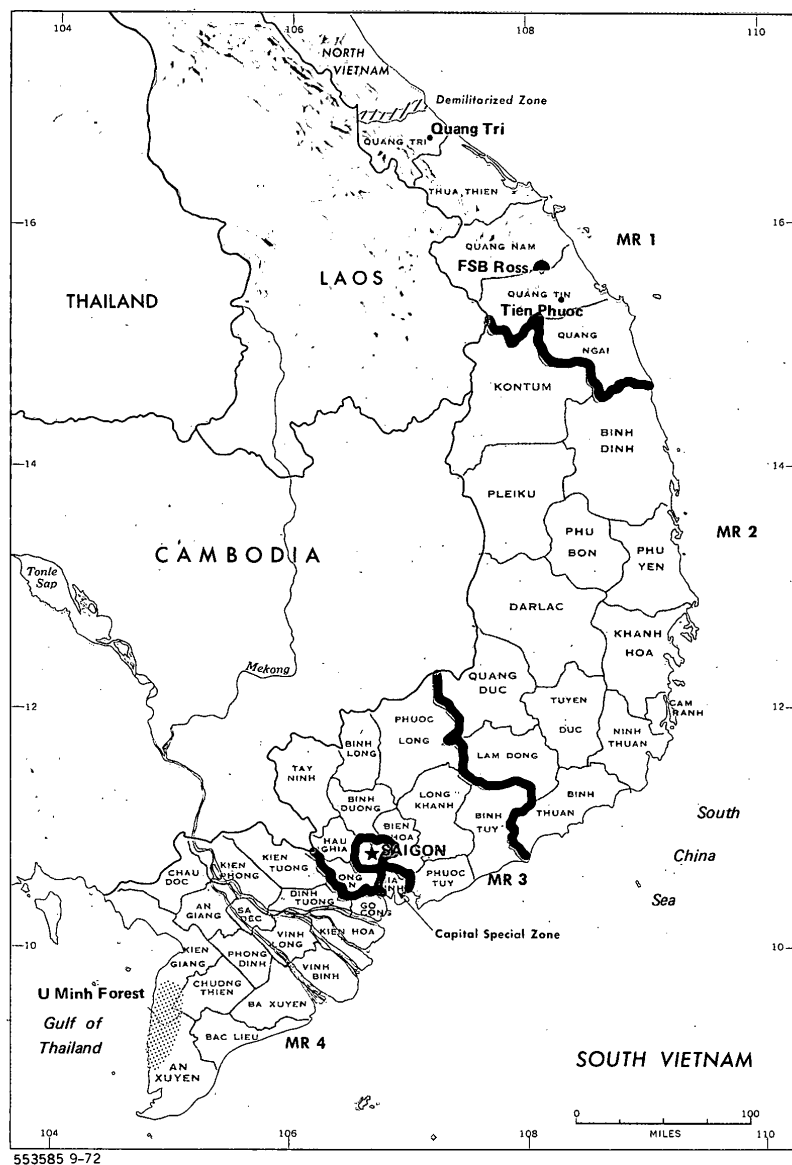
The Soviets [redacted]

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Cambodian forces trying to reopen Route 5 have not met any strong resistance since their drive began on Monday. (Page 6)

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VIETNAM

Government forces trying to retake the citadel in Quang Tri City are encountering intense resistance from Communist infantry and artillery. Several hundred South Vietnamese Marines in the citadel are holding positions near the eastern and southern walls, despite heavy artillery and mortar barrages. Several Marine battalions are moving closer to the citadel on three sides.

Government forces operating near Fire Support Base Ross in Quang Nam Province engaged the Communists in several skirmishes. In the Tien Phuoc area of Quang Tin Province, enemy pressure forced South Vietnamese forces to withdraw farther to the east from the district town.

In the delta, there has been a sharp increase in Communist activity, mostly directed against small outposts in the provinces that border on the U Minh Forest. In Chuong Thien Province, more than a dozen outposts were attacked, and communications have been lost with half of them. Enemy gunners also shelled a number of outposts in Kien Giang Province, and a few have fallen to the Communists.

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ISRAEL - ARAB STATES

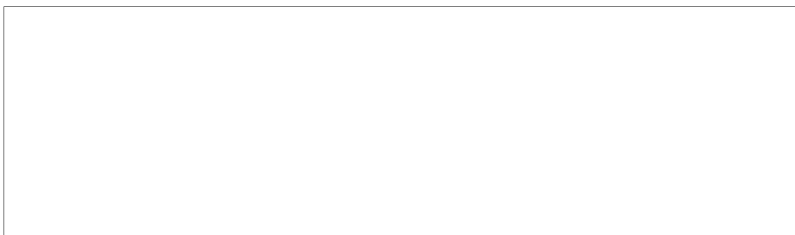
Israeli Minister of Police Hillel has told US Embassy officials in Tel Aviv that Israel intends to focus "unremitting pressure" on Syria in order to halt Arab terrorist activities. Hillel said that Syria had provided the principal base and support for terrorist activities abroad and that the situation "must be made so painful" for Damascus that it will force an end to terrorist activities. He said that Israel intended to put the entire onus on Syria for terrorist actions regardless of where they originate. He added that the Israeli air strikes of 8 September were not an example of the kind of pressure Israel has in mind, "since they did not hurt Syria." The Israeli action, Hillel said, would be "much more drastic."

Israeli officials' public statements also indicate that Tel Aviv has declared "open season" on the fedayeen and on the host Arab states supporting them. Israeli Chief of Staff Elazar has spoken in terms of mounting a "continuous war" and Prime Minister Golda Meir told the Knesset that Israel will strike at the terrorists "everywhere our hand can reach."

Meanwhile, Israeli aircraft have continued daily flights over southern Lebanon and Syria since their attacks of 8 and 9 September. An Israeli military spokesman has denied Syrian claims that an Israeli aircraft was shot down yesterday.

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GREECE

Ambassador Tasca estimates that Prime Minister Papadopoulos has less than a 50-50 chance of remaining in office much longer. He cites Papadopoulos' erratic management of the government, his failure to curtail corruption among his associates, and his mistakes in handling Greece's recent confrontation with Cyprus as the primary causes of dissatisfaction. Military officers at all levels no longer believe Papadopoulos is the only man who can run the government--a widely held view until now. Papadopoulos' fall is not likely to change things very much. The government will remain in the hands of the military and it will continue to be pro-US and pro-NATO. What is less certain is who will replace Papadopoulos. If someone like his estranged former associate, Dimitrius Stamatelopoulos, comes in, Greece may again move toward parliamentary government. On the other hand, figures such as Deputy Prime Minister Pattakos or armed forces chief Angelis, both of whom are authoritarian personalities, would preside over a regime even more rigid than that of Papadopoulos. The ambassador does not rule out the possibility of a take-over by some unknown officer with a strong ideological bias, but says the embassy has no leads in this direction.

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Stamatelopoulos, once a prestigious member of the Revolutionary Council and a close military colleague of Papadopoulos, resigned a few years ago in pique over the lack of direction of the regime. Since then, he has been a frequent critic of the government. Papadopoulos, however, has never seriously attempted to reprimand him. Although Stamatelopoulos is a strong personality and a logical choice, we have seen no evidence that he has the necessary military backing to take over the government. Nevertheless,

the situation is increasingly unstable.

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INDONESIA-CHINA

[REDACTED] Suharto had stated earlier that Djakarta should not be left behind as other countries move on the China question.

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The Chinese, in recent contacts with the Indonesians at the United Nations, have indicated that they are prepared to consider normalization once Sino-Japanese relations are established. In the meantime, the Chinese Foreign Ministry has ordered that all possible assistance be given merchants in Hong Kong wishing to do business with Indonesia.

The new soundings seem likely to go reasonably well, but the normalization process is expected to be slow. The Indonesian Army remains reluctant to restore ties and many other Indonesian quarters hold strong anti-Chinese feelings. Like the Chinese, the Indonesians want the first steps to be made through trade.

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USSR

Satellite photography of the cosmonaut training center at Star Village near Moscow shows several large buildings under construction.

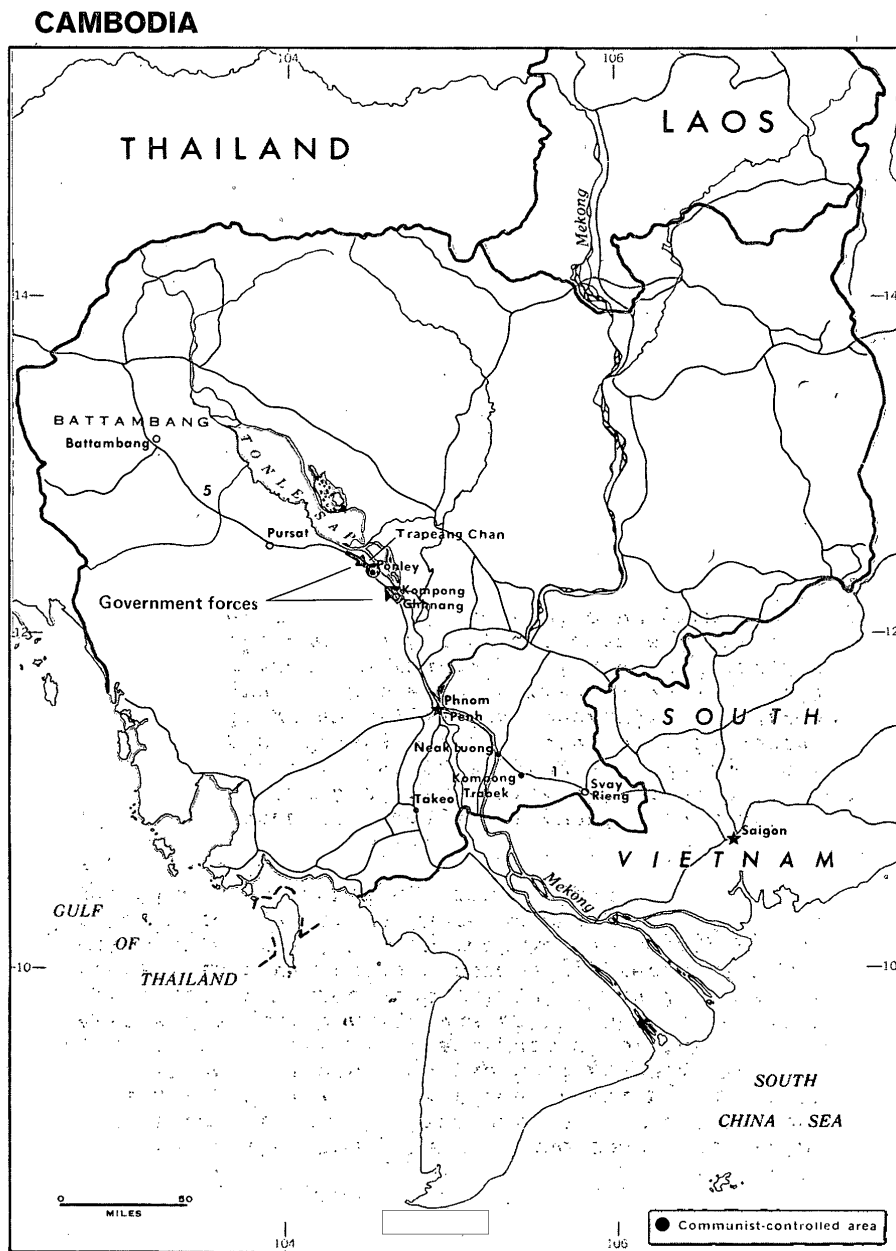
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We expect complex future missions that will involve large space stations operating in earth orbit. There are currently about 50 cosmonauts in training. The US had roughly the same number of astronauts in training at the peak of the Apollo program.

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NOTE

Cambodia: Government forces trying to reopen Route 5, the land route for rice shipments from Battambang Province to Phnom Penh, have not encountered any strong resistance since their drive began on Monday. By yesterday the 11 battalions moving up the highway from Kompong Chhnang City were some nine miles south of the enemy-controlled town of Ponley. The other column of four battalions proceeding down Route 5 from Pursat has reoccupied the small town of Trapeang Chan and is now about three miles from Ponley.

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